

The Old Tough

Newsletter of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association
(Registered Charity No 20038816)



Issue 9: Spring 2023

Editorial

Welcome to the Spring edition of The Old Tough newsletter!

2022 was a very busy year for the Association as we marked the 100th anniversary of the disbandment of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers and five other Irish Regiments. While no special occasion arises this year to remember the men of the Dublin Fusiliers and their families, your Association nevertheless has plenty of event ideas which we hope to bring to fruition in 2023.

In this edition of The Old Tough, our article on upcoming events outlines our initial plans for the year. For many members, the highlight will be a trip to the area around Ypres/Ieper in Belgium from 4 to 8 September next, where we will visit a number of Great War sights of Irish interest. There will also be a number of domestic events which, we hope, will be popular with members.

Other articles in this edition include the following:

- the latest Dubs' News;
- a biography of Private John Fox 8643, Royal Dublin Fusiliers;
- the War Memorial Window in St Philip's Church, Temple Road, Dartry, in Dublin, and
- the plea by Cardinal Logue in 1917 for more Catholic Chaplains at the Front.

We hope that you find this edition informative.

Usually our Old Tough newsletter has articles on a former Dublin Fusilier and on a memorial of WW1. If any member wishes to contribute a short article or has information of interest on either topic, we would be delighted to receive it. As ever, all suggestions and contributions to future editions of this newsletter or to our annual journal, The Blue Cap, may be forwarded to rdfa1918@gmail.com.

The Editorial Committee

Paul Appleby, David Buckley, Philip Lecane, Thomas Murphy and John F Sheehan

Dubs' News

Message of Condolence on Private Seán Rooney's Death

After news broke on 15 December 2022 of the killing of Private Seán Rooney in Lebanon, our Chairman, Brian Moroney, sent the following message of condolence on behalf of the Association and its members to Major General Adrian Ó'Murchú, the Defence Forces Deputy Chief of Staff (Support):

"I had hoped to write to you wishing you and yours a very happy Christmas and New Year, but sadly events in Lebanon have distressingly overwhelmed us all.

On behalf of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association, may I offer our most sincere condolences and sympathies to you, in your role as Asst. Chief of Staff, and the entire family of Óglaigh na hÉireann on the loss of one of its members, killed on peacekeeping duty, and the wounding of his comrades yesterday in Beirut. The business of soldiering though a proud one always carries a great risk, and this has been brought home most brutally to all today. A death is always tragic but perhaps more so in this season we call one of peace and goodwill.

We also extend our sympathies to those of the soldier's family, and I know that they will be comforted by his larger family in the Army in which he served, carrying out his service on behalf of a now grieving nation. As an Association founded on the quest to remember the Irish Soldier of the Great War, we feel great empathy at the loss of an Irish Soldier of today's Óglaigh na hÉireann, and I know you appreciate and understand this feeling.

Yours most sincerely

*Brian Moroney
Chairman
Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association."*

Re-Enactment of Handover of the Royal Barracks to the National Army, 18 December 2022

The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association was represented at a ceremony in Collins Barracks, Dublin (formerly the Royal Barracks) on 18 December 2022 which re-enacted the handover of the Barracks to the National Army 100 years earlier. Pictured in the middle of the group is David Buckley holding the Association's Standard during the re-enactment ceremony. Behind the group is a replica Rolls Royce Armoured Car. This ceremony was organised by the 2nd Battalion Association



of the Irish Defence Forces. Other organisations represented that day included the Organisation of National Ex-Servicemen, the Civil Defence, the Irish Military Vehicles Group and Lord Edward's Own, a historical re-enactment group. Standards were dipped, and a minute's silence was observed in memory of the late Private Seán Rooney.

Death of Former Member, Captain Brendan Forde

We were also deeply saddened to learn of the death of Captain Brendan Forde (pictured) on 20 December 2022. He first went to sea aged 17, and his adventures in a long career included being arrested by Russians and saving the life of an officer who fell through ice in the Baltic. On the RTÉ Radio 1 programme, *Seascapes*, some years ago, he recounted an amusing anecdote. En route to Japan in 1958, his cargo ship was skirting the Marshall Islands where the Americans were conducting atomic tests. One night while serving as officer of the watch, he witnessed a blinding flash that lit up the world. He immediately rang his skipper: "*Captain, nuclear explosion off the port bow*", and received the following memorable reply: "*Thank you, bridge. I'll be up in a moment*".



Brendan retired from Irish Lights in 1997 with the rank of Commander. He was an accomplished artist who spoke Swedish and German and was studying Polish at the time of his death. Brendan was also a longstanding and committed member of the Association. His uncle, 16 year old Private Frank Forde, 10th Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, was killed in France on 9 September 1916. Frank was the subject of two articles in Association publications, most recently in *The Old Tough*, Issue 5 (Autumn 2021). Member Paul Taylor represented the Association at Brendan's funeral on 27 December and offered our condolences to his wife, Elke, daughters, Gráinne, Sonja and Brenda, and family.

Presentations to the Association

Happily, the New Year opened on a more positive note with two presentations to the Association.

On 25 January, the Association received a plaque from the Killester WW1 Memorial Campaign (pictured) in appreciation of our visit last Autumn to the Killester Garden Village, the housing estate established for WW1 ex-servicemen and their families.

At the Annual General Meeting of the Royal British Legion in Ireland on 28 January last, the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association



was awarded the Legion’s Silver Salver. The accompanying commentary noted our excellent advocacy in remembering the historical legacy of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers and our special leadership role in marking the centenary of the disbandment in 1922 of the Irish Regiments of the British Army. Chairman, Brian Moroney, accompanied by Seamus Greene and John F Sheehan, accepted the award – see the accompanying photographs below.



Irish Times Review of ‘Come on the Dubs! – A Brief History of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers’

In The Ticket supplement of *The Irish Times* on 28 January last, Paul Clements reviewed a number of recently published local history books relating to Irish wartime experiences. ‘Come on the Dubs!’ was one of those books to receive a positive review. Here is what Paul said of the Dubs’ History in his article:

“The horrors of the first World War and the heavy losses suffered by an Irish regiment are traced in ‘Come on the Dubs!’ A Brief History of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers (Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association, €10). A total of 827 officers and 13,406 men of other ranks served in the Fusiliers, with 4,858 killed or dying of their wounds.

They came from all walks of life; some were labourers or from skilled or semi-skilled occupations, others had professional backgrounds. The devastating effect of chlorine gas attacks left many debilitated; others died because of army procrastination in providing medically recommended anti-malarial supplies such as mosquito nets, gloves and quinine.

The human story of individual families who suffered bloodshed on the western front is brought out. Three McDonnell brothers (John, Patrick and Peter) from Bride Street, Dublin, were killed in 1915. Families were torn apart between those who went off to fight and those who stayed at home. Sgt William Malone died in 1915 while the following year his brother, Lieut Michael Malone of the Irish Volunteers, was killed at Northumberland Road during the Easter Rising. In 1917 Company Sgt-Maj William Kent, who was killed on the front, was the brother of Commdt Eamon Ceannt, executed a year earlier for his part in the Rising.”

There remains a steady demand for our Dubs' History. Some bookshops have sold out of their initial supply and have sought fresh stocks. Individuals have also been in touch with us directly seeking one or more copies. To date, the Association has distributed over 450 copies to members, friends and booksellers. Copies remain available for sale from the Association for the modest charge of €10 each (including postage).

Membership Update

Suzanne O'Neill, our Membership Secretary, has recently reported to the Association's Committee that membership of the Association now stands at 118. The encouraging aspect is that 38 new members have joined in the last 12 months. New members are always welcome, and if you know of relatives or friends with similar interests who may wish to join the Association, then please guide them in our direction. The membership form can be found either on our website, <https://www.greatwar.ie/member-information/> or by sending an email to rdfa1918+Membershipsecretary@gmail.com. Our membership subscription for 2023 remains at €20 for members on the island of Ireland and €25 for overseas members.

Upcoming Events

Trip to Ypres/leper in Belgium, 4 - 8 September 2023

The Association is in the process of planning a trip for paid-up members to the WW1 battlefields of Belgium and France, with particular emphasis on the involvement of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers. We hope to be based in Ypres/leper.

The dates will be 4 - 8 September next (Monday to Friday inclusive) flying out and back through Dublin Airport. If you are interested, please email your expression of interest to Brian Moroney as soon as possible at brianmoroney55@gmail.com.

The tour will be limited to 25 people, and the cost will be €950 per person approximately. Further details will follow after expressions of interest and plans are finalised.

Dublin Festival of History, 25 September-15 October 2023

During recent discussions with the Dublin City Library and Archive, the Association was asked to contribute a speaker to this year's Dublin Festival of History. Our President, Mr Tom Burke MBE, has kindly agreed to give a talk on an aspect of Dublin's history vis-à-vis the Great War and its aftermath for the Irishmen who served in the War. Members will be advised when the Festival schedule and other details are finalised.

Screening of Film about the Dublin Fusiliers interred in Mount Jerome Cemetery, Dublin

Many of you will be aware that members, John O'Brien, Anthony Barnes and Seán Ryan, have been leading a research project to identify the graves of former Royal Dublin Fusiliers and their families in Mount Jerome Cemetery, Harold's Cross, Dublin 6. To date, the graves of over 80 men have been located.

As the project has developed, a record has been kept of the progress made. This research work has now been captured in a film which is nearing completion. The Dublin City Library and Archive have kindly agreed to host an initial screening of this film. Discussions are to be held in relation to the arrangements for this screening. Members will be notified and invited to the initial screening in due course.

Domestic Trips

The Events Committee of the Association has begun to examine what might form part of a programme of domestic trips of historical interest in 2023. It is likely that there will be up to three such trips this year taking in Kilkenny, Naas and the National Maritime Museum in Dún Laoghaire. Dates and times will be notified to members in due course together with information on cost.

When the arrangements are made, members wishing to attend will be invited to notify their interest in advance to our Secretary, Thomas Murphy. Members attending will be expected to make their own transport arrangements to the venue on the day. Anyone needing a lift or other assistance may notify their requirements to the Secretary, and every effort will be made to organise a suitable solution for the member concerned.

Remembrance Events

Members will be aware that various events remembering the fallen of WW1 and other conflicts take place annually. Other individual remembrance events take place from time to time. The following list outlines the known public remembrance events in 2023, many of which are expected to involve the Association in some capacity.

Date/Time	Event	Place
25 April, 06.30*	ANZAC Day	Grangegorman Military Cemetery, Dublin
25 April, evening	Service of Remembrance	St Ann's Church, Dawson Street, Dublin
28 April, noon	Dedication of Sligo Great War Memorial Garden	Cleveragh Park, Sligo
11 June, 10.30*	Combined Irish Regiments Annual Parade	Whitehall, London
1 July, 16.30*	Somme Commemoration	Ginchy Cross, Guillemont, France
8 July, noon*	Somme Commemoration	War Memorial Gardens, Islandbridge, Dublin
16 July, 11.00	National Day of Commemoration	Collins Barracks, Dublin
10 October, 09.45*	RMS Leinster Commemoration	RMS Leinster Anchor, Dún Laoghaire Seafront

(The events with the * indicate that the RDFA Standard will be present.)

As the year proceeds, this list of remembrance events will be updated in future editions of The Old Tough. Members are encouraged to attend at least one of these events.

Private John Fox 8643, Royal Dublin Fusiliers**Paul Appleby**

The Irish Military Archives recently asked the Association to help a relative of Private John Fox 8643, Royal Dublin Fusiliers. Members of the Association then did some research and contacted the lady in question. This article summarises the results of that research.

According to his official birth record, John Fox was born in Ballon, Co Carlow, on 5 April 1884. His parents were Patrick Fox, a labourer, and Catherine Fox (née Connors). John married Margaret Cummins in Rathoe, Co Carlow, on 2 August 1906. Census and official records for their marriage and children's births between 1901 and 1914 all indicate that John Fox worked as a labourer. Although no enlistment papers for Private Fox survive, his regimental number suggests that he may have joined the Royal Dublin Fusiliers in 1903.

At the outbreak of World War 1, it is likely that John Fox was a reservist who was called up and assigned to the Fusiliers' 2nd Battalion. His Medal Card indicates that he arrived in France on 23 August 1914. Like the rest of the 2nd Battalion, he fought at the Battle of Le Cateau two days later. Red Cross records indicate that he was with 'D' Company captured near Ligny afterwards. This first involvement of the Dublin Fusiliers in WW1 has been covered in detail in a number of our Blue Cap journals. See in particular the articles by Tom Burke and Paul Appleby in Volumes 19 (2014) and 24 (2020) respectively.

A great many of the 400 captured Dublin Fusiliers ended up in Limburg Prisoner-of-War Camp. Sadly, Private John Fox died there on 8 March 1916. A Red Cross document dated 16 March 1916 indicates that he was born in Ballon on 31 March 1884 (which differs by a few days from his official birth date). Severe pneumonia is listed as the cause of his death, and he is recorded as being buried in the Prison Camp Cemetery with military honours following a religious service. A cross bearing his name was placed on his grave.

In the following year, the prisoners helped to erect a large Celtic Cross (pictured overleaf) in the graveyard to honour the Irish and British soldiers who died in captivity there. 28 of the 45 deceased men were in Irish regiments. For unknown reasons, the plaque associated with the Cross records Private Fox's first name as James (arrowed in the picture overleaf), even though the available British Army and Red Cross records cite it as John. After the War, these 45 bodies were exhumed and re-buried at Niederkwehren Cemetery, Kassel, Germany. Private Fox's grave reference there is Grave No III.K.8.

After Private Fox died, his widow, Margaret, had six children to support - Patrick, Thomas, Ellen, John, Catherine and Mary. Patrick, the eldest, was only nine years old.

Sources

<https://armyservicenumbers.blogspot.com/2009/06/royal-dublin-fusiliers-1st-2nd.html>

<https://grandeguerre.icrc.org/en/>

<https://www.cwgc.org/>

<https://www.fold3.com/>

<https://www.greatwar.ie/>

<https://www.irishgenealogy.ie/en/>

Thomas Murphy (photographs)

www.census.nationalarchives.ie



Stained Glass War Memorial Window, St Philip's Church, Dartry

John F Sheehan

Over the winter, I attended an Art Exhibition at the Parish Hall adjoining St Philip's Church (Milltown Parish) at Temple Road, Dartry, Dublin 6. While I was there, I asked one of the Church representatives if there was a War Memorial in the Church. The lady I spoke to confirmed that there was. She said that she would get the key and open the Church so that I could see it.

The entrance to the Church is through an open porch beneath an intended belfry. On entering I looked for the usual brass plaque, but my attention was drawn to the War Memorial Window remembering those from the Parish who were killed in the 1914-1918 War. The Window is the work of Alfred Ernest Child who was responsible for many windows in churches all around Ireland and armorials in the Chapel Royal in Dublin Castle. The Window is in fact a series of stained glass windows, the most prominent of which are the three lancet windows containing the figure of a soldier holding a rifle representing sacrifice, Christ representing victory and an angel holding a laurel wreath representing peace. See the picture on the following page. Integrated into the central lancet window are the names of the 19 parishioners who lost their lives (pictured below). None of those listed was a Royal Dublin Fusilier.

Above the lancet windows are roundels (not pictured) in the form of four circular windows and one quatrefoil with the Royal Coat of Arms and badge of the Royal Artillery, the badge of the Royal Navy, the Cross of St George, the badge of the Royal Army Medical Corps and the badge of the Royal Air Force.

The adjoining road, Palmerston Road, is named after Lord Palmerston who gave the site for the Church. It was consecrated in 1867 and enlarged in 1878/79. The architect was Sir Thomas Drew who designed St Anne's Cathedral in Belfast and Rathmines Town Hall.

My thanks to the staff at St Philip's for showing me around and the Parish Development Committee for the interesting pamphlet outlining the history of this wonderful building and its interior.





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In Memoriam Notice

The eagle eyes of member John F Sheehan spotted this remarkable In Memoriam Notice in *The Irish Times* on 25 March 2023. Isn't it wonderful that nephews of Maccon John MacNamara continue to remember his tragic death 105 years earlier?

According to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, Maccon belonged to the 2nd Battalion of the Dubs, and his death is remembered on Panel 79 and 80 of the Pozières Memorial near Albert in northern France.

MacNAMARA, Maccon John (One Hundredth and fifth Anniversary). 2nd Lieut Royal Dublin Fusiliers. K.I.A. at the Somme on March 26, 1918. Remembered by his nephews George and Maccon.



Letter of Appeal by Cardinal Michael Logue sent to the Editor of *The Irish Catholic* in 1917

Dear Sir

I am very sorry to find that there is still a sad lack of Catholic chaplains at the front, both in France and at Salonika. A letter to me from an official at the War Office states that there are 93 Catholic chaplains short in France alone; and from authentic sources I learn that the Catholic soldiers at Salonika are in a state of spiritual destitution. Sixty additional chaplains would be required to meet the pressing need there. One letter from Mesopotamia gives an account of a similar state of things there. This state of things is becoming daily worse, from the fact that many chaplains are retiring, either from exhaustion or because they have completed the time of their service, while very few are volunteering to take their place.

The conditions to which this shortage has led are harrowing. Any one may infer this for himself who glances at the returns of killed and wounded which are daily published in the Press, since the conflict at the several fronts has become more active. It accounts for the lamentable facts which are continually brought under my notice by correspondents. Catholic soldiers are ordered to attacks from which many of them never return; while there is no priest even to give them general absolution. The wounded—many of them mortally wounded—after these attacks are calling out for a priest, and no priest available. Hospital ships are obliged to put to sea with their sad burdens without Catholic chaplains, though the poor Catholic wounded in their desperate condition are continually calling out for a priest. This, be it remembered, is not due to any lack of zeal or shirking on the part of the chaplains actually in the service, whose devotion and heroism are conspicuous, but to the fact that their number is not sufficient to meet all the wants.

Such is the state of things to which my attention is directed, from time to time, while I am helpless to apply a remedy. It often makes me regret that I am not a few years younger, when I might, at least, do one man's share to prevent a soul from perishing. That souls are perishing—because there is not a sufficiency of priests to prepare those who are going daily into certain danger of death, or to administer the last consolations of our holy religion to those who are mortally wounded—there can be no doubt. Hence the call which is made, trumpet-tongued, upon every priest who is fitted for the work, and who can possibly be spared from more important duties—if any duty be more important than coming to the aid of souls who are summoned to judgment on very short notice.

I am, dear Sir, yours faithfully,
MICHAEL CARD. LOGUE.
Armagh, 11th September, 1917.

Source

The Freeman's Journal, 14 September 1917, page 2 (accessed at www.findmypast.com).

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Spectamur Agendo